

*As our aging population rapidly increases, the number of older adults with compulsive hoarding behavior will also rapidly increase as the severity of compulsive hoarding behaviour increases with age.*

*— Grisham, Frost, Steketee, Kim, & Hood, "Age of onset of compulsive hoarding" (Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 2006).*

## THIS FULL HOUSE

### Program Description

This Full House is a multifaceted program launched as a pilot project in Edmonton, Alberta, for older adults with compulsive hoarding behaviour (CHB). This specialized service, which ran for the duration of 2008, empowered clients to take some control of their hoarding behaviour by

- providing assisted clean-ups;
- involving clients in negotiating their own services;
- ensuring clients have a voice in making decisions about ways to address their hoarding behaviour;
- support to address hoarding-related issues.

Professionals—including social workers, home care nurses, psychiatric nurses, fire and safety investigators, humane society workers, and environmental health and safety officers—worked together to offer this essential support.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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To see this pamphlet on-line:

[www.crsc.ualberta.ca](http://www.crsc.ualberta.ca)

What does a community response look like when it supports the health and social needs as well as the capacities of older adults with compulsive hoarding behaviour living in the Greater Edmonton Area?

**A community based approach to helping older adults with**

# HOARDING BEHAVIOUR

**Study Results**

## Compulsive hoarding is defined as:

a) the acquisition of, and failure to discard a large number of possessions that appear to be of useless or of limited value;

b) cluttered living spaces that cannot be used as intended, and

c) significant distress and/or impairment is associated with the clutter.[1]

**As clutter increases, fire, falling, sanitation issues, depression and isolation, and other significant health problems can be significant risks.**[2, 3]

### Sources:

[1] Frost & Hartl, "A cognitive-behavioral model of compulsive hoarding" (*Behaviour, Research & Therapy*, 1996).

[2] Grisham, Frost, Steketee, Kim, & Hood, "Age of onset of compulsive hoarding" (*Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 2006).

[3] Damecour & Charron, "Hoarding: a symptom, not a syndrome." (*Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 1998).

# The Value of This Full House

*"That's what a person needs: somebody there who doesn't think you are the worst person in the whole world because you have this house full of stuff."*

– Client of This Full House

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### Results from clients and their families:

- All potential evictions were prevented by the services of This Full House.
- Access to a support group helped family members of those with hoarding behaviour feel less isolated, providing them with more hope.
- Clients expressed feeling accepted, encouraged and not judged by staff of This Full House.
- The support group for those with hoarding behaviour was highly valued.

### Results from multi-agency team members:

- Service providers reported that the collaborative and community-based approach of This Full House did make a positive difference for their clients with hoarding behaviour. For example:
  - Clients were able to remain in their own home.
  - Some of their isolation needs were addressed.
  - Their potential for harm was reduced.
  - They experienced a feeling of empowerment.
  - They gained insight into their behaviour.
- The members of the collaborative team also experienced benefits resulting from participation in this planning process. For example:
  - Members of the collaborative team were able to access the expertise of other professionals
  - They were able to maximize this expertise.
  - They generated new knowledge about compulsive hoarding.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To understand the impact of a community response to the needs of older adults with compulsive hoarding behaviour living in Edmonton.

Interviews were conducted with:

- Clients of This Full House;
- Family members of clients;
- The members of the multi-agency team that directs This Full House

*Because of This Full House, "there's less junk... It's a positive step"*

-- Client of This Full House

*Without This Full House, "I would still be walking down one little path between the bathroom, bedroom and one side of the kitchen and that would have been it."*

– Client of This Full House